

Project Proposal

Proposal Title: Iosepa Bullhog - Phase 3

Proposal Number: 1363

DWR Region: Central Region

Lead Agency: BLM

County: Tooele

Project Manager: Brook Chadwich

PM Phone: 8014915653

Regional Priority: Within Focus Area

Project Type: Terrestrial Habitat

Proposed Start Date: 7/1/2009

Project Location: 1½ miles east of Iosepa Hawaiian Historic Site on the western slope of the Stansbury Mountains

Project Description: Bullhog 936 acres and hand cut, pile and burn 245 acres of juniper trees on degraded sagebrush habitat

Description of Problem/Need: Juniper expansion on the western side of the Stansbury Mountains has degraded sagebrush habitat and greatly increased the risk of wildfire to the Iosepa Hawaiian Historic Site and nearby ranches in Skull Valley. Reducing juniper on the landscape will enhance wildlife habitat, improve fire regime condition class, and reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels. The SLFO has already completed 780 acres of juniper mastication and 302 acres of pile and burning with another 200 acres of pile burning to occur in 2009 as part of the Iosepa WUI fuels reduction project. Healthy sagebrush ecosystems should consist of a diverse array of plants and support a wide variety of wildlife species. However, sagebrush habitat on the western side of the Stansbury Mountains is seriously degraded due to juniper encroachment. Where junipers dominate they outcompete understory species for light, moisture, and nutrients eventually resulting in nearly complete removal of the understory. Without understory vegetation the native seed bank is depleted and the site becomes susceptible to soil erosion and invasion by cheatgrass. Excessive fuel buildup can eventually lead to catastrophic wildfire which may threaten private property and further degrade the ecosystem by promoting the growth and expansion of cheatgrass. Once established, cheatgrass becomes a major obstacle preventing the recolonization and growth of native perennial vegetation. In order to curb this process of degradation it is essential that action be taken. Degraded sagebrush habitat can be improved by removing junipers and reseeded with perennial species when necessary. This proactive approach reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire and possible cheatgrass encroachment by decreasing fuel loads and replenishing the seedbank with desirable species. The Salt Lake Field Office of the BLM will treat the encroaching juniper to decrease the risk of high severity wildfire, restore ecosystem function, and improve wildlife habitat.

Objectives: 1. □ Improve Fire Regime Condition Class, decrease fuel loading and reduce the risk of catastrophic crown fire by removing at least 90% of existing junipers.
2. □ Allow for natural recovery of understory species following juniper removal.

Relevance to Strategic Plans: The project area occurs within the sagebrush steppe type which is one of the key habitats identified in the WAP. This area supports mule deer (Tier III). Numerous other species of concern (Tier II) also inhabit the area including neotropical birds and raptors.

The proposed treatments lie within Central Region UPCD focus areas.

The proposed project will address some of the habitat management strategies outlined in the deer management plan for herd unit 18 Oquirrh - Stansbury including: continue to restore and improve sagebrush steppe habitats critical to deer according to DWR's Habitat Initiative; cooperate with federal land management agencies and private landowners in carrying out habitat improvements such as reseedings, controlled burns, water developments etc. on public and private lands; and maintain and/or enhance forage production through direct range improvements throughout the unit to achieve population management objectives.

The proposed projects will address the following goals and objectives of the Division of Wildlife Resources most recent strategic management plan:

Resource Goal: expand wildlife populations and conserve sensitive species by protecting and improving wildlife habitat.

Objective 1: protect existing wildlife habitat and improve 500,000 acres of critical habitats and watersheds throughout the state by 2011.

Objective 2: Increase fish and game populations to meet management plan objectives and expand quality fishing and hunting opportunities.

The proposed action and alternatives described in this EA conform to the Pony Express Resource Management Plan (RMP) (1990) Decision One, page 56, as amended by the SLFO Fire Management Plan (FMP) (1998) Alternative 2-Proposed Action/Integrated Fire/Resource Management Plan page seven. Although the proposed action and alternatives are not specifically mentioned in the plan, they are consistent with the objectives, goals, and decisions of the RMP and FMP. Projects of this nature are identified in the BLM's Onaqui Mountain West Allotment Management Plan (1986), and the Onaqui Mountain Habitat Management Plan for the Onaqui wild horse herd. The objectives in the Stansbury Mountain Fire Management Unit are to utilize fuels treatments to reduce fire severity and occurrence and reduce hazardous fuel accumulation in areas that will reduce the threat of large uncontrolled wildland fires, create mosaics to increase edge effect, and improve wildlife and plant diversity (BLM-Salt Lake Field Office, Fire Management Plan, September 2004). The Iosepa WUI EA (UT-020-2004-123) specifies the need and authorization for mechanical treatments in this area.

Potential Risks: Increase in cheatgrass.

Proposed Methods: 1. □ Use rubber-tired or tracked bullhogs to masticate 936 acres of juniper. The treatment will remove at least 90% of all junipers. Residual trees are to be of varying size and age classes and left in small clumps to act as untreated islands. The edges of the treatment unit will be designed in a mosaic fashion to blend into the natural landscape and to increase edge effect. All brush species

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will be avoided when possible;

2. ☐ Slash, pile, cover 245 acres of juniper not suitable for mastication due to steep slopes; trees will be cut using chainsaws;
3. ☐ Burn piles during winter or early spring.

Shapefile Name: 1363_losepa_bullhog_Ph3_proposed_2009

Seed Source:

UPCD Reg Team Coord Date: 11/6/2008

Proposed
NEPA Action:

Proposed
Arch Action:

☒ Vegetation Monitoring ☐ Wildlife Monitoring

Monitoring Information: The BLM will conduct at least two 1/10 acre stand data monitoring sites which include photo points within the treatment boundary. Line point transects will also be established to monitor understory response to juniper removal. These plots will be read prior to treatment and soon after treatment and may continue for up to five years post treatment. The data collected include juniper canopy cover, density, basal diameter, and height as well as cover and composition of understory vegetation.

Grazing Management: The treatment area is located within the Salt Mountain and Lost Creek allotments. Rangeland Health Assessment data collected in 2002 show that both allotments are not meeting the rangeland health standards due to Juniper encroachment. Juniper encroachment is listed as a threat to native and seeded areas on the allotment. The mastication treatment would improve the demand for forage among livestock

SPECIES BENEFITING

Mule Deer

Ferruginous Hawk

Neotropical Birds

LAND OWNERSHIP

Owner	Acres
BLM	1181
Total	1181

PROPOSED FUNDING

Source	Amount Requested	Date Approved	Amount Approved
BLM	\$183,524.00		\$0.00
Unfunded Balance	\$111,460.00		\$0.00
BLM ARRA	\$50,000.00	3/12/2009	\$50,000.00
Totals	\$344,984.00		\$50,000.00

PROPOSED BUDGET

Item	Description	DWR Account	Partner Contrib.
NEPA	prep, scoping and consultation	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Personal Services	Seasonal 14 days for project administration	\$0.00	\$1,800.00
Personal Services	Monitoring, seasonal 2 days	\$0.00	\$300.00
Equipment Rental	BLLM truck for seasonal	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
Archaeological Survey	Cultural clearance for 936 acres @ \$24/acre	\$0.00	\$22,604.00
Contractual Services	25% of bullhog contract, 234 acres @ \$230/acre	\$0.00	\$53,820.00

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Contractual Services	75% of bullhog contract, 702 acres @ \$230/acre	\$161,460.00	\$0.00
Contractual Services	Slash, pile & cover 245 acres @ \$400/acre	\$0.00	\$98,000.00
Totals		\$161,460.00	\$183,524.00

Project Map:

Iosepa Bullhog Phase 1 and 3

